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May 2, 2011

NEWS RELEASE

**GRAND JURY INDICTMENT RETURNED IN CASE INVOLVING
DEATHS OF TWO DRIVERS AND AN UNBORN CHILD IN LAKEVILLE**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that a Dakota County Grand Jury has returned an indictment charging* Jason Styrbicky, age 37 of Buffalo, Minnesota, with three counts of Criminal Vehicular Homicide and one count of Careless Driving in connection with a multi-vehicle crash that occurred on May 24, 2010 in Lakeville which killed two persons and an unborn child. These charges allege that Styrbicky drove a semi-tractor trailer in a grossly negligent manner, resulting in the deaths of Pamela Brinkhaus, age 50 of Elko New Market, Kari Rasmussen, age 24 of St. Anthony, and the unborn child of Kari Rasmussen.

On May 24, 2010 at about 11:30 a.m., separate passenger cars driven by Pamela Brinkhaus and Kari Rasmussen were stopped in traffic on I-35 northbound near County Road 70 in Lakeville. Both cars were stopped behind a semi-tractor and trailer carrying dozens of crates of live bees. Another semi-tractor trailer driven by Jason Styrbicky of Buffalo was traveling at 68 miles per hour as it approached the stopped vehicles. Despite passing an electronic MNDOT warning sign about a lane closure ahead, Styrbicky did not brake or slow his semi-tractor and rammed into the rear of both cars, crushing them between his vehicle and the semi-tractor and trailer containing the bees. The impact released tens of thousands of bees and this hindered rescue efforts of first responders and emergency personnel. The driver of the truck containing the bees assisted emergency personnel in controlling the bees and provided protective suits to medical personnel who were attempting to aid the victims. Pamela Brinkhaus died at the scene, and Kari Rasmussen, who was airlifted to North Memorial Hospital for emergency care, died later that day, as did her unborn child who had been conceived approximately eight weeks earlier.

Further investigation into this matter by the Minnesota State Patrol determined that Styrbicky's vehicle had been in good operating condition prior to the crash. Styrbicky told a State Patrol Investigator that he had been reaching down to the floor of the semi-tractor cab trying to retrieve an energy drink can prior to the crash occurring and was unable to stop by the time he looked up. The investigation also revealed that Styrbicky was driving without his required corrective lenses.

Backstrom commented: "Tragedies like this can happen in seconds at freeway speeds when drivers are not paying close attention to the surrounding traffic and highway warning signs." Backstrom expressed his sympathy to the families and friends of Pamela Brinkhaus and Kari Rasmussen on behalf of all law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation.

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Jason Styrbicky made his first court appearance on this indictment this morning. Bail was set by Judge Martha Simonett in the amount of \$100,000 without conditions and no bail with conditions. Styrbicky's next court appearance is set for July 25 at 9:00 a.m. in Hastings.

For a copy of the indictment, go to <http://services.co.dakota.mn.us/ComplaintSearch>. A mug shot may be viewed at <http://services.co.dakota.mn.us/InmateSearch> while in custody.

If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

**Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*